United Nations E/CN.6/2011/NGO/37

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
3 December 2010

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fifth session
22 February-4 March 2011
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Legião de Boa Vontade, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

10-67055 (E) 291210

Please recycle

Statement*

1. The fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) offers a timely opportunity to consider the many challenges today's women face in obtaining equal treatment throughout the world. In particular, the conference seeks to address the unequal proportions of women in education and in the workforce, and the particular discrimination women face when attempting to learn about or work in the sectors of science and technology. In a sense, then, the problems addressed by this year's CSW can be summarized as a problem of education; for it is often the discrimination women face in their pursuit of education that allows later prejudice in employment to persist.

2. Today, the international community lags behind the pace it envisioned when it made eradicating gender inequality in education part of its eight Millennium Development Goals at the historic Millennium Summit of 2000. This year's CSW session offers a propitious opportunity to reconsider how best to achieve this goal — an opportunity to re-evaluate old strategies, and to propose new ones. As a means of divining a more efficacious solution to the problem of gender inequality in education, this statement presents the successes enjoyed by Legião de Boa Vontade (a Brazilian non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council) in the field of women's education, and then reframes the organization's strategies as a means of closing the global inequality gap in education. In so doing, it proposes a model not only for the creation of equal opportunity in the labour force, but also for the development of permanent long-term solutions to global crises.

3. In its recent *Global Education Digest* (published in September of 2010), UNESCO and its Institute for Statistics (UIS) highlighted some worrisome educational trends. Most alarming of all, the *Digest* noted that 63 out of the 157 countries it surveyed — fully 40 per cent — are considered to be far away from achieving the goal of eradicating gender inequality in education by 2015, assuming present trends continue.

4. As the *Digest* points out, much work remains to be done in order to achieve the goal of educational parity between genders. And unfortunately, even those gains that have been made in the struggle to reduce gender inequality in education risk being wiped out as the world struggles with a flagging global economy and other concerns. But in spite of these crises, it is critical that the world — Governments, civil society and international agencies alike — continues to make progress in educational policy. Education (and especially the education of women and girls) is a central part of any strategy that would resolve the issues currently troubling the world. As crises arise, budgets and expenditures will shift; but education must remain a constant priority in order to ensure the arrival of the permanent solutions that only a more educated populace can produce.

5. The importance of a quality education, and the necessity of making such an education available to all who would seek it, is a concept Legião de Boa Vontade has embraced for decades. It is hoped that a brief examination of the pedagogical practices and philosophies of the organization will be a useful part of the exchange of ideas that, now more than ever, must lead to parity in educational opportunity. As

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an internationally recognized social, educational and humanitarian organization with operations in seven countries (Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Paraguay, Uruguay, Portugal and the United States of America) and with a more than 60-year history of enacting positive change, Legião de Boa Vontade has much to offer in conversations about policy. And with women the direct beneficiaries of nearly 85 per cent of the more than 8 million services the organization performs annually, it is clear that the advancement of women is a top priority for the organization.

6. At the heart of nearly every Legião de Boa Vontade programme is a belief in the transformative power of education. Whether offering job training to the unemployed, teaching pregnant women how to prepare for motherhood, or providing fun and educational activities dedicated to fostering the culture of peace in local youths, the organization believes strongly that learning is the answer to the many challenges life presents; and it emphasizes that belief throughout its numerous schools and preschools, shelters and community centres. Material assistance can be a significant part of helping to resolve global problems, and the organization does oversee several programmes (like its annual Christmas campaign, which last year gave away more than 1,200 tons of food to needy families) that distribute essential goods to communities in need. But while the provision of material goods can often treat the symptoms of diseases like hunger or poverty, only education can offer a permanent cure.

7. Legião de Boa Vontade believes strongly that the hope for a universally educated world rests on the equal inclusion of women in the process of education, and on the natural transfer of that education from women to their families. As the famous nineteenth century North American educator Charles McIver once wrote: "When you educate a man, you educate an individual; when you educate a woman, you educate an entire family". For this reason, any analysis of the educational practices and strategies of Legião de Boa Vontade must necessarily include a brief explanation of the Baby Citizen programme. As part of the Baby Citizen programme, pregnant women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds are provided multidisciplinary care and education as they travel the path towards motherhood. They are given medical attention and educated about the physical implications of pregnancy and childbirth, but they are also provided important psychological care and support. And, in keeping with the goal of providing all-encompassing care, they are also assisted in developing the core values — love, solidarity, compassion, and others — that will help them as mothers and that they can instil in their children from the beginning.

8. This last component is especially critical in understanding the educational philosophy of Legião de Boa Vontade. For in the Baby Citizen programme, as in every programme offered by the organization, acquiring and developing values and emotional intelligence is just as important as learning factual knowledge. The actions of the organization are rooted in a core belief in what the organization calls ecumenical spirituality — a philosophy exemplified by the New Commandment of Jesus: "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34). In the philosophy of ecumenical spirituality, love is the essential conduit for channelling knowledge to do good.

9. The Baby Citizen programme is one example of the commitment of Legião de Boa Vontade to offering a multidisciplinary education, but there are many others.

Throughout the world, the organization runs a number of primary, secondary and pre-primary schools. These schools — provided free of charge and free of any sort of gender bias, academic or otherwise — combine excellent classroom education with a number of additional services that unite to create a complete and all-encompassing educational experience. On-staff medical professionals ensure that student health is properly looked after, while available psychologists provide critical emotional care. The organization's schools even employ social workers to work with the families of their students to help overcome challenges like poverty and unemployment.

10. In addition to their unique, multifaceted approach to education, schools and preschools of Legião de Boa Vontade are also distinguished by their embrace of a philosophy called the pedagogy of affection. Developed by organization president José de Paiva Netto, the pedagogy of affection stresses the need for universal love in the learning process, and the importance of play as an essential component in the education of young children. The importance and success of the pedagogy of affection cannot be overestimated: although many of the organization's schools operate in areas scarred by violence, there are no instances of violence involving its students, who have learned from an early age the value of feeling and expressing fraternal love. Well-schooled in academic subjects and reared in the loving and nurturing environment created by the pedagogy of affection, students grow up to become productive and compassionate members of society (as is evidenced by the striking number of former students who return to the organization as caregivers and professional resources later in life).

11. For those who do not have the opportunity to mature under the pedagogy of affection from the beginning, Legião de Boa Vontade and its President Paiva Netto have developed the similar ecumenical citizen pedagogy. Much like the pedagogy of affection, the ecumenical citizen pedagogy is designed to instil and encourage core values like fraternal love, solidarity and compassion; but it is intended to help those who already have considerable life experience as opposed to those who are learning and experiencing life for the first time. In a way, then, the ecumenical citizen pedagogy is a kind of second education. Its goal is to help adults and older youths (both men and women) discover within themselves the core values so essential to the mission of Legião de Boa Vontade — values that have sometimes lain dormant or neglected. Thanks to the ecumenical citizen pedagogy, the organization has helped thousands to transcend difficult situations (ranging from situations of domestic abuse, to unemployment and poverty, to depression and suicidal impulses) and redefine their lives based on the ideals of love, compassion and fairness.

12. The ecumenical citizen pedagogy has been adopted throughout the world at Legião de Boa Vontade shelters, community centres and schools. It is paired with more practical education, such as job training seminars and language classes, to provide those who seek help (especially women) with a multidisciplinary education that contains both pragmatic and philosophical teachings. In this way it reflects the organization's overall commitment to providing not just material assistance, but also spiritual, psychological and emotional tools for establishing better, more sustainable lives.

13. The implications of the experiences of Legião de Boa Vontade are significant, and have tremendous relevance to the current session of the Commission on the Status of Women. It is clear that education must continue to be a top priority when

world policy decisions are made. And the best practices of Legião de Boa Vontade suggest that a broader notion of education is needed — a definition that includes not just academic rigour but also teachings grounded in essential human values and spirituality. And of course, this new brand of education must be made available to all, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, economic situation, or any other form of discrimination. In order for education to achieve its full potential, women and girls must be able to reap its benefits just as much as their male counterparts; for it is women and girls who have always been and will continue to be the agents of educational dissemination, the teachers of their families.

14. The educational policies of Legião de Boa Vontade have shown the tremendous power for good that can be created when women are provided equal access to all forms of classroom education and job training, along with spiritual, values-based teachings. It is hoped that the success of these policies will encourage a more widespread shift towards the kind of comprehensive educational philosophy that is so essential to the world's future. In the words of Legião President Paiva Netto: "Take care of the Spirit, reform the human being. And everything will transform itself".

United Nations E/CN.6/2011/NGO/38

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Statement submitted by the American Cancer Society, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

10-67061 (E) 291210

Please recycle

Statement*

1. The American Cancer Society (ACS) is a leader in the global cancer control movement, addressing the growing global cancer and tobacco burden through a variety of programmes and initiatives throughout the world, including Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. The mission of the American Cancer Society is to eliminate cancer as a major health problem by preventing cancer, saving lives and diminishing suffering from cancer.

2. ACS is an NGO partner of the Non-Communicable Disease Alliance (NCD Alliance), the group formed by the international federations (Union for International Cancer Control, International Diabetes Federation, World Heart Federation and International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease) representing the four main diseases outlined in the WHO 2008-2013 NCD Action Plan of the Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases. The American Cancer Society is also the secretariat for Cervical Cancer Action, a global coalition to stop cervical cancer.

3. **Acknowledging that**:

- The fifty-first session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women urged Governments, the relevant United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to "take all necessary measures to ensure the rights of girls to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, and develop sustainable health systems and social services, ensuring access to such systems and services without discrimination".

4. **Considering that**:

- Improved health care is a key pillar of global actions to combat poverty and address discrimination of women and girls. Strengthened health-care systems can ameliorate gender health disparities, empower women socio-economically, and promote women's participation in development policies.
- NCDs (cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and chronic respiratory disease) are responsible for 60 per cent of the world's deaths, 80 per cent of which occur in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).
- Despite being responsible for 60 per cent of the world's deaths, the proportion of overall global development assistance for health invested in NCDs is less than 3 per cent.
- Cancer and NCDs are gender equity issues: NCDs are among the top two leading causes of death among women in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), with death rates from NCDs among women in Africa being twice as high as in high-income countries.
- The main common risk factors for NCDs are modifiable, namely unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and use of tobacco and alcohol.
- Tobacco use is associated with 30 per cent of all cancer deaths in developing countries (including deaths from cancer of the oral cavity, larynx, esophagus, and stomach).

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- Women currently comprise about 20 per cent of the world's smokers, but the tobacco industry is aggressively marketing their products to women and girls in high population countries. Prevalence of tobacco use among women is increasing at an alarming rate as the tobacco industry is increasingly targeting young women and girls in low- and middle-income countries. Without continued action to reduce smoking, deaths among women aged 20 years and over will rise from 1.5 million in 2004 to 2.5 million by 2030; almost 75 per cent of these projected deaths will occur in low- and middle-income countries.

- Efforts to reduce smoking will result in fewer deaths and less disease from lung cancer, heart disease, stroke, chronic respiratory disease and other conditions.

- Cervical cancer, a disease caused by infection with some types of the human papillomavirus (HPV), affects half a million women globally every year.

- Cervical cancer accounted for 275,000 deaths worldwide in 2008 with 88 per cent occurring in less developed countries due to gross disparities in access to screening and treatment.

- HPV vaccines that protect girls and young women against high-risk types of HPV have the potential to significantly reduce the burden of cervical cancer around the world, improve reproductive health, and save millions of women's lives.

- Women are typically the primary guardians of family health and well-being. Improved prevention and care of NCDs can considerably alleviate the disproportionate burden borne by women and girls as the primary caretakers of the chronically ill, thereby helping to address a significant social and economic barrier for women.

- Internationally, cancer NGOs, particularly those focused on women's cancers, have been critical in raising awareness of and commitment to the promotion and protection of women's rights and have been ardent proponents of educating women as a means to empower them in individual patient-provider contexts and in policymaking processes.

- United Nations General Assembly resolution 64/265 calls for a General Assembly high-level meeting on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (September 2011), offering an unparalleled opportunity to address these diseases and reduce their impact on women and girls.

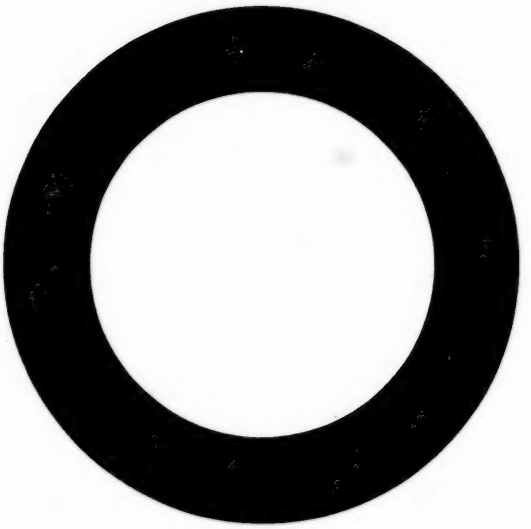
5. **We call for**:

- The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, Member States and NGOs to incorporate and embrace NCD control in its recommendations to improve the status of women and in addressing gender inequities.

- Governments to prioritize cervical cancer in their national development and health programmes and ensure that the necessary political and financial commitments are made and sustained.

- Governments to ensure adequate and affordable breast cancer early detection and treatment.

- Multilateral agencies to provide leadership and maximize their contribution to the necessary processes, including rapid pre-qualification that will ensure widespread availability of HPV vaccines.
- Governments ratify and implement the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control so that the girl child can grow up free from the influence of the tobacco industry.
- United Nations Member States to ensure their Heads of State or Government attend the United Nations General Assembly high-level meeting on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (September 2011), and ensure there is integration of gender perspectives at the meeting.
- United Nations Member States to ensure the General Assembly high-level meeting on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (September 2011) covers the full spectrum of issues raised by NCDs — prevention, early detection, access to essential medicines and technologies, treatment and care and the health systems to deliver this in an equitable manner.
- The General Assembly high-level meeting on NCDs to offer all parties the opportunity to change the way these diseases, and their associated risk factors, are viewed and addressed around the world. We believe that at a minimum, the high-level meeting should conclude that:
  - Governments should be accountable and measured on NCD plans.
  - The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control should be fully implemented by all countries.
  - Member States should give a commitment to prevent the preventable.
  - Globally agreed approaches to NCD treatment and care should be implemented.
  - Resources should be made available to deliver global NCD interventions in all countries.
  - NCDs should be specifically included in the successor goals to the MDGs and their role on achieving the MDGs recognized now.



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Statement submitted by IFENDU for Women's Development, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

10-67067 (E) 050111

Please recycle

Statement*

1. Ifendu for Women's Development (IFENDU) is a non-governmental organization based in Enugu, Nigeria, in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2010. IFENDU was founded in 2004 as a follow-up to the pioneering work of a women's congregation which gave women access to the (then exclusive) world of formal education in Nigeria since the 1920s. IFENDU came into existence out of the realization that although many Nigerian women have received formal school education, formal education alone without corresponding changes in society's negative perceptions and attitudes towards women has not lifted the cultural, social and economic burdens that women bear. In a world where three-year-old "men" are accorded more human recognition and dignity than 30-year-old women, in the name of culture and tradition, IFENDU seeks to educate all to dismantle unjust cultural and other structures that undermine women's full human status. IFENDU works to promote women's full participation in all spheres of life on a basis of equal partnership with men.

2. IFENDU affirms the pivotal role of education in empowering women and the whole society. Since 2004, through training workshops and publications we have been creating awareness on the quality of women's life and raising questions as to what happens to women after graduating from college. For instance: Into what kind of social, economic and cultural climate do the female beneficiaries of our educational system return after graduation? Is their quality of life any different socially, culturally and economically from that of other women who have not attended school? Are they shielded from cultural/traditional discriminations which the society metes out against women? Unfortunately, there have not been many positive responses to these questions.

3. The print and electronic media reinforce gender stereotypes, which define who or what a good woman is; as do the entertainment and advertisement industries coupled with strong negative messages about women from the pulpit. Visual messages from the media include: "women stay home and are seen welcoming men back from work". Yet, this image does not correspond to the reality of many in family life in our context. Most Nigerian women are actively engaged outside the home; if not in wage employment, in farm work, trading under the hot sun. Many are the major income earners. Furthermore, career women in top managerial positions are often negatively portrayed in movies as bad women. Similar messages often issued from the pulpit include "a woman who does not cook for her husband is a bad woman". These messages have the combined effect of subliminally suppressing women who have the ambition to take on high-level jobs, even where spousal support is guaranteed. These considerations are relevant to the theme of the fifty-fifth session of enhancing women and girls' access and participation in education, training, science and technology, including the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work. This is with the recognition of role models. The fate or outcome of the women trailblazers either encourage or discourage other women and girls to aim higher.

4. IFENDU affirms the observation in the report on the 2010 online discussion on gender, education and employment that women's educational attainment does not necessarily translate into improved employment opportunities. This is the case not

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only with women resident in their own countries but also women migrants, for instance African women in the diaspora. There are cases of women who hold higher degrees obtained from their host countries but could only find social service jobs unrelated to what they studied. Such experiences send out messages contradictory to efforts to enhance women and girls' access and participation in education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work.

5. In addition, there are current practices in some hiring companies which resort to giving short-term contract jobs, downsizing, laying off staff, and moving to areas/countries with cheaper labour, lower or no taxes. Such practices have increased with the trend of globalization, throwing more and more families into deeper poverty. Women and children are the worst hit in these scenarios.

6. In light of these observations, IFENDU recommends as follows:

In addition to very good programmes being initiated by many national Governments to enhance women's well-being and status, that Governments and corporations be required to report on what they have done or are doing to:

- Regulate or curtail representations of women in the entertainment and advertisement industries as well as print and electronic media which reinforce gender stereotypes, which have limiting effects on women's advancement (for instance as criterion for retaining or withdrawing their licence to operate).
- Educate leaders of religious communities towards more gender-sensitive preaching.
- Promote men's participation in childcare and domestic work in order to free women more to engage in educational and employment opportunities.
- Ensure that big and small enterprises alike implement anti-discrimination laws related to recruitment, pregnancy, salary and promotion (for instance through government subsidies, with criteria and conditions attached for retaining or losing their licence to operate).

United Nations E/CN.6/2011/NGO/40

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
3 December 2010

Original: English

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Statement submitted by Priests for Life, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

10-67266 (E) 291210

Please recycle

Statement*

1. We would like to thank the Commission on the Status of Women for focusing on the critical areas which impact women's lives around the world and recognize that advancements in the basic areas of education, job training and access to technology are ways to improve the impoverished lives of women.

2. Employment helps women to improve their lives and rise from poverty. The astounding success of microcredit loans across the developing world amply illustrates the benefits of giving women the chance to use their skills and economic empowerment results from access to vocational training and job opportunities.

3. A woman who has a source of income is able to put food on the table, educate her children and afford health care. She receives respect from others in the community who look to her for leadership resulting in political involvement and opportunities to help others in her community and beyond.

4. It is the currently accepted wisdom across the spectrum of ideologies that when women and girls have access to education, it is not only their lives that improve, but the lives of their children and community. Education needs to be available to all girls and women to reduce the unacceptably high female illiteracy rate. Education not only empowers women with reading, writing skills and math skills but results in self-confidence and empowerment which helps women assume leadership roles in their communities. Education provides the most effective path out of poverty.

5. Women who receive educational opportunities are healthier and their children are healthier. Educated women have healthier pregnancies and safer deliveries resulting in healthier newborns and in reductions in both maternal and child mortality. Educated women are able to make better decisions for themselves and their children.

6. The areas of education and employment are critical to improving lives and programmes in these areas must provide for the unique childbearing capacity of women. Pregnant girls must be allowed to receive an education and pregnant women must not be threatened with job loss. Women must be allowed to fulfil their innate capacity to bear children without penalty.

7. Abortion is not an acceptable solution to meeting the educational and employment needs of women. The destruction of a woman's child through the violence of the abortion act does not result in true empowerment. Rather, any so-called "reproductive freedom" gained through abortion only anaesthetizes and deadens the nurturing souls of women, forcing them to accept oppression of their procreative lives.

8. Abortion does little to affirm the dignity of women — instead it separates their sexuality from the intrinsic act of procreation and reduces them to mere machines to satisfy male pleasure, with no connection to the emotional and spiritual forces that are intrinsic to women's identity.

9. Abortion can be emotionally crippling. Increasingly, women who suffer the repercussions of abortion often describe it as violent and brutal. There is grief, sadness, shame and anger. They resort to self-destructive behaviours and numb

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themselves with alcohol and drugs. Some re-enact their trauma through promiscuity and repeat abortions, trapped in a cycle of abandonment, rejection, a sense of helplessness and abuse. The Alan Guttmacher Institute, the research arm of Planned Parenthood Federation of America, recently revealed that 50 per cent of all women who have an abortion will go on to have another. Others attempt to repress their feelings through eating disorders, depression, anxiety and attempted suicide.

10. True women's rights and freedom will never exist until women's reproductive capacity is valued and their children are cherished by society and the men who father them. Violence against women will never end until society recognizes the benefits of fashioning life, instead of insisting upon its necessary destruction.

11. Health care in any form, including maternal health or reproductive health, that includes access to abortion is not really health care at all. Abortion ends the life of one patient and may injure the other physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. The dualistic rhetoric of abortion rights splits mind from body, sexuality from procreation, pleasure from loving passion, and mother from child. Health care that includes abortion threatens women and their children with violence and abandonment.

12. Abortion on demand has created a mindset that killing is the solution to unwanted responsibility — not just for the baby, but for the woman who will not exercise her "freedom of choice". Men who refuse to accept their responsibility are enabled by abortion to abandon women and treat them with disrespect and contempt often leading to acts of violence and abuse. Gender violence plagues the lives of women around the world as far too many women suffer abuse and violence on a daily basis.

13. Cultural practices which devalue the life of the girl child and deny her an education must be stopped. Employment practices which discriminate against women must end.

14. Initiatives which seek to deny or destroy the inherent procreative ability of women do not advance or empower women. Rather, programmes which include access to abortion treat women's unique capabilities as a problem rather than recognizing the universally valued role of women as the bearers of a country's future, its children.

15. Woman-centred initiatives for empowerment which include abortion are unacceptable and distract from meeting the real needs of women. Our energies must focus on the daily struggles women face not only in accessing education and employment but also to ensure access to clean water and adequate nutrition, access to life-affirming health care, the provision of skilled birth attendants and emergency obstetric care, protection of children, aid to those suffering from HIV/AIDS, support for victims of violence, the rescuing of women trapped in trafficking, laws to allow women to own and inherit land, and enforcement of child support laws. Progress in these areas would do infinitely more for women than insisting on universal access to abortion.

16. The lives of women need to be valued and respected. Women should not have to deny their feminine nature, be made to feel second class to men, or be penalized for their unique procreative capacity.

17. Women should be affirmed for their female nature; their lives should be respected throughout the life cycle and they should be assisted in the critical role of mother. Education and employment should be available to women and girls while affirming and providing for — and not penalizing — their unique role and capacity.